

AMATEUR CINE

W O R L D

SEPTEMBER

FILMING THE GROWTH
OF FLOWERS

...

A SUPER HOME CINEMA

...

THE TRIUMPH OF 16mm.

BY ANDREW BUCHANAN

...

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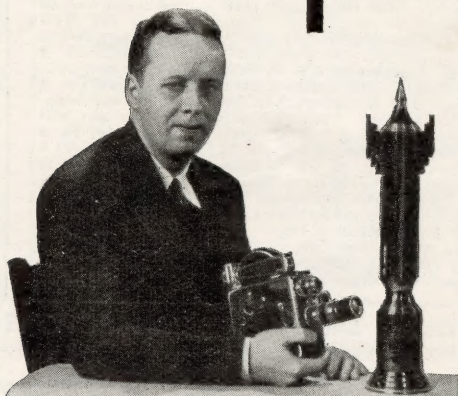
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Looking Ahead

AS pointed out in the article, "The Triumph of 16mm.," in this issue, the war has given a tremendous impetus to the use of substandard film. Andrew Buchanan declares it to be the film of the future, as popular for general use as 35mm. and in some respects more practical than 35mm. He affirms that 16mm. will offer a profession which will grow as rapidly as its elder brother and certainly more sanely, since it will be required for other than entertainment purposes. Governmental, scientific, medical and industrial bodies will, it may be confidently predicted, apply business methods to the making of 16mm. specialised films. Economy will therefore be the keynote, as it always has been in amateur movie-making.

We thus get a rosy picture of the future of substandard; and we can add a few more glowing colours if we bear in mind that there are likely to be some striking technical developments in this field after the war. Research is evolving them now but their application to commercial requirements must necessarily await the peace.

We should, however, do well to remember that the professional film industry will not stand still and tamely allow substandard to outstrip it. Here, too, research is going on and important inventions emerging. The use of colour will certainly be more widespread if only as self-defence against 16mm., in which colour is a more practical proposition—at any rate, so far.

Stereoscopy, too, will doubtless appear in time, and it will not make use of spectacles of coloured glasses or polarising filters, for so long as stereoscopy demands a conscious effort on the part of the audience it cannot be universally used. Experiments are proceeding in Russia and successful results already achieved. The first stereoscopic cinema was built in Moscow some seven or eight months ago. We think that some of the tantalisingly brief details of the system, given by the inventor, S. Ivanov, in "The

American Cinematographer" will be of interest to readers.

The stereoscopic film has two images on each frame, like stereoscopic photographs, and filming can be done in an ordinary cine camera with one lens, two mirrors hinged to each other at an angle of about 180 degrees being placed in front of the camera, 'dividing' the one image into two.

An ordinary projector is used, the only modification from normal procedure being the mirror arrangement placed at the projection ports.

"The principal thing is the screen," writes Ivanov. "A special grid made of radiating transparent and opaque bars is placed before the blank white sheet. Through this grid two images taken for the right and left eyes are projected on the screen. The rays of light issuing from the one image are partly, on reaching the grid, swallowed up by its opaque bars, and partly pass between

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GORDON S. MALTHOUSE
Editor

them and are projected on the screen as narrow lines.

"The same thing happens with the rays from the other image, with this difference only—that its narrow bars, passing through the grid, are distributed among the lines of the first image cast on the screen. Thus, the same screen shows the projection of two images arranged in the form of an opened fan, the strokes of which follow in strict alternation," i.e., the first spoke is an element of the image for the right eye, the second for the left, the third for the right and so on.

The wires are so fine and close that they cannot be distinguished at a distance of about 30 ft. There are thirty thousand of them, with a total length of about 93 miles. The metal framework alone weighs six tons.

A drawback to the system is that each spectator has to find his own viewpoint and keep to it, the image being momentarily lost if the head is turned; but, it is stated, the problem has already been solved in theory and its practical application is now being put into effect.

It seems, therefore, that if stereoscopic cinema films are not just round the corner, they are nevertheless in sight. One hesitates to make any forecasts of specific stages in the progress of movie-making, for only a few years ago substandard sound was regarded as scarcely practical. It is unlikely, however, that problems of stereoscopy will bother any amateur reading these words. But problems of sound may well do so. It is in this field that we may expect notable advances.

So in future *Amateur Cine World* will publish regular articles on substandard sound, both in order to keep you abreast of current practice and to prepare the ground for forthcoming developments. As announced last month, the first article will deal with the conversion of a 200B projector to sound. Next will come an account of how one of the earliest 16mm. sound machines was modernised in accordance with present-day practice to produce a quality of sound that compares favourably in every way with the best modern machines.

This article will be followed by the first of a regular monthly series to be published under the heading, "Tracking it Down." It will be a sort of talkie colloquium, a platform for the exchange of views, notes on experiments, suggestions for the resolving of individual difficulties, and so on. As such, it will require your co-operation if it is to attain its maximum usefulness. So we shall be glad to learn of any problems you may come up against, and to know what you are aiming at in your experiments. If you are interested in substandard sound, therefore, whether you have a talkie projector or not, we should like to hear from you.

THE EDITOR

CHANGE OF PUBLICATION DATE

Will readers please note that *Amateur Cine World* is now published on the 20th of the month and is dated for the following month; e.g., our next issue, the October, will be on sale on September 20th.

New Cine Accessories

WE are glad to be able to announce two new cine accessories, a limited supply of which, it is hoped, may be available before long. They both come from Messrs. Cinex, Ltd. The first is a new sliding handle for rewinding the spring of the Paillard model H camera even when the turret is out of 'normal' position, done by sliding the handle so that its length is shortened by half. It can also, of course, be pulled out to its full length for quick rewinding, as hitherto.

The other gadget is a frame-by-frame counter which fits on to the side of the camera and registers up to 1,000 frames, and both adds and subtracts. Two types are available: one for the 9.5mm. and 16mm. models and the other for the H8 (8mm.) camera. The latter registers up to 2,000 frames.

It is interesting to note that the film which won the coveted Lloyd Bacon trophy in the United States "Home Movies" 1940 contest was won by a Kodachrome film, "Angels Are Made of Wood," taken

exclusively with the H8 camera. This success, in which both author (Herman Bartel, of New Rochelle, N.Y.) and camera share, is the more noteworthy in that the American critic is invariably very severe and the standard is therefore high—principally because there are more movie-makers in America than anywhere else, so that very large entries for the major competitions are assured.

The new Paillard L8 camera for double-run 8mm. films has now made its appearance overseas. Meanwhile Messrs. Cinex are steadily carrying on, very much alive. Their war-time address is The White House, Harlow, Essex, and they maintain a very efficient servicing department at "Wyntersbrook," Potter Street, Nr. Harlow.

We have recently received enquiries about the Unipod, and are pleased to report that a number are still available from A. O. Roth, 85, Ringstead Road, Catford, S.E.6. Next month's "Do It Yourself," by the way, deals with the making of a "Chest-i-Pod."

Filming the Growth of Flowers

An account of the apparatus used for making an amateur counterpart of the famous "Secrets of Nature" films. It is worthy of note that the equipment is designed for use with a standard camera without elaborate refinements.

**By
PHILIP
WRIGHT**

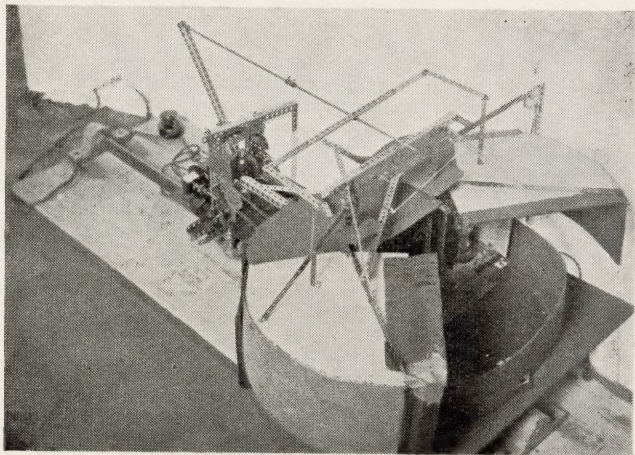


Photo 1.

ENTERPRISING amateur cinematographers seem to have invaded most of the fields of cinematography which at first sight would appear accessible only to the professional with special apparatus and more or less unlimited funds. *Amateur Cine World* has done much to make the enthusiast aware of the unlimited possibilities of his hobby, and it is the purpose of this article to show how, with the simplest of cameras, excellent results may be obtained in yet another field.

Those fascinating films of the "Secrets of Nature" class are now seen less frequently than used to be the case. The writer was always particularly interested in those films which revealed the graceful movements of flowers during their development, and the growth of plants and their roots. These articles will show how such work can be carried out by the amateur who has sufficient patience.

In essence, the method by which such films are obtained is very simple. It is simply an extension of the well-known dodge of running the camera slowly to speed up action, as is sometimes done for comic effect. It should be possible simply to slow the camera down sufficiently to make plant movements visible. In practice this would create several difficulties. For one thing, the exposure would be inordinately long and call for an impossibly small stop or shutter opening. Secondly, owing to this long exposure, artificial light would be required for about two thirds of the time taken by the action (this would, of

course, depend upon shutter design). And thirdly, control of exposure, already sufficiently difficult under these circumstances, would be complicated by the fact that the exposure would depend upon the speed of the camera. Each flower subject calls for its own most suitable speed, and would thus require a fresh exposure calculation, and the speed may even have to be varied during filming.

The practice followed is therefore to run continuously some form of independent timing gear. This starts up the camera at predetermined intervals, when it exposes a single frame at a reasonable aperture and then stops. The speed of the camera is thus independent of the frequency with which it operates, so the latter factor can be varied at will without affecting the exposure of individual frames.

The camera I have used, and to which the apparatus is particularly adapted, is the standard Dekko, so no one need be deterred at the start by lack of an elaborate camera.

The first problem in any out-of-the-ordinary work with the Dekko is to obtain an external drive in unison with the shutter. The only external shaft on the camera, the hand starting knob, makes the awkward number of 19 revolutions per 55 frames. Fortunately the Meccano $\frac{1}{4}$ " pinion has 19 teeth, so that in order to get a shaft revolving at the speed of the shutter all that is needed is a 55 toothed gear wheel to mesh with one of these 19 toothed pinions. I had this specially made and it cost me only 1/6d. These two gears

are the key to many problems with the Dekko, but we shall return to their application later.

Let us now consider the general problems that confront us in filming the opening of a flower. First, it is obvious that in order to get constant exposure night and day, artificial light must be used. On the other hand, the flowers will require alternations of sunlight and darkness if they are to behave naturally, and in any case they would quickly wither under the constant heat and glare of electric lamps at close quarters.

We thus have to arrange that whenever a frame is exposed, the daylight is cut off and our lamps are switched on, and then, the exposure completed, the lights must go out

of cutting off daylight from the subject.

(2) The motor and gear box which control the camera and other apparatus.

(3) The electrical timing gear.

An important item, which need not be described here, is a really solid and heavy titling bench upon which all the apparatus can be built up.

Much thought was given to the means by which daylight may be kept from the subject during the periods of exposure. Professionals, working on large subjects, use a studio in which the shutters of all the windows are specially designed to be operated electrically. This was obviously impracticable, and moreover as it was my intention to work, at any rate at first, on comparatively small subjects, such a system would have been an unnecessary complication. I wanted, if at all possible, to avoid the introduction of a separate electric motor to operate shutters, on account of both expense and simplicity.

The plan finally evolved was to effect this "black-out" by means of hoods which swing open and shut above the subject, on vertical axes. This avoids the necessity of counterbalancing the weight of the hood, as would have been necessary if it had swung on a horizontal axis, and makes it quite

possible to operate it by means of the same motor as drives the camera, as we shall presently see.

Photographs (1), (2) and (3) show general views of the apparatus, and reveal the fact that most of it is constructed of Meccano. At the right in all three photographs is the lighting unit combined with the hoods referred to above. (1) and (3) show them in the position occupied during the intervals between photographs, and in (2) we have the apparatus as it appears at the moment when a frame is being exposed.

The lamps are of the ordinary household type, one of 40 watts and one of 60 watts being used. They are mounted in simple, approximately parabolic tinplate reflectors, as is the common practice with the simpler commercial titlers. Between these reflectors there stand two upright pillars projecting some 6 inches above their tops and braced together above. From these pillars are pivoted the two halves of a U-shaped horizontal cover which can thus open and close above the

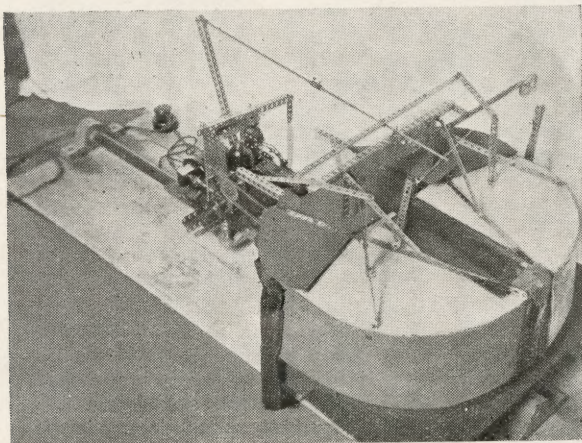


Photo 2.

and daylight or darkness, as the case may be, must be allowed to exert its influence upon the subject.

Regarding the camera, we must ensure that the shutter is closed between exposures. It must start up at the correct predetermined intervals in time with the lighting arrangements, and expose automatically one frame each time. It must stop itself with certainty with the shutter closed after each frame, and the exposure must be constant throughout the film.

We must also be able to control the interval between exposures, and it is desirable to be able to vary the interval without difficulty during a film, say in order to speed up an otherwise tediously slow period of growth, or to slow down on the screen an action that would otherwise appear too rapid to follow easily.

The apparatus by which all these results are achieved can be divided into three sections, in addition to the camera itself.

(1) The lighting arrangements and means

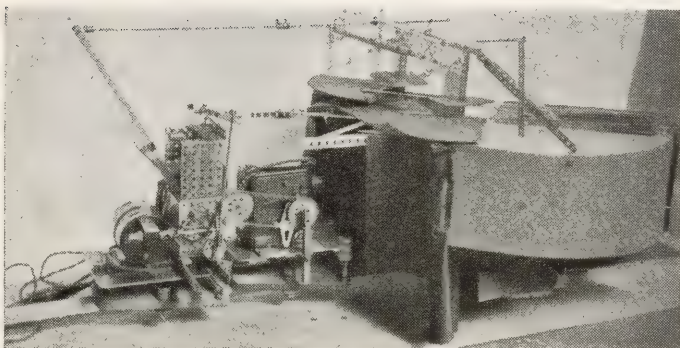
Photo 3.

position to be occupied by the subject in front of the lamps (photographs 1 and 2). These covers have vertical rims projecting downwards all round their curved edges.

There is also a curved wall (photograph 1) fixed on the subject platform so that, when the shutters close, the subject is completely boxed in except for the space between the reflectors, through which the camera points. The shutters and the wall just mentioned are painted dead black inside and carefully provided with light traps where they meet and at all points where light might escape and draw down the wrath of the police.

The manner in which the two halves of the hood are linked together to move in unison can clearly be seen in (1) and (2). A weighted cord is connected to the centre of the strip that links the two halves of the hood, and the weight is adjusted so as just to close the hoods. They are opened by the horizontal pull rod which can be seen in the photographs passing back to the top of a long lever projecting up from the gearbox.

The gearbox itself has several functions to perform and in order to describe it, reference must be made to Figs. 1 and 2. The motor used incorporates a worm reduction gear, and from the slow speed shaft the drive is taken



through a universal coupling to a 3 to 1 bevel reduction gear. (This arrangement was made so that when the apparatus is used as a vertical titler, the motor shaft will still be horizontal). Through the simple train of reduction gears 1, 2, 3, 4, the drive is taken to shaft A, the main shaft of the gearbox.

Above the gearbox is fixed the switch which stops the motor. It is a two-way switch of the type normally fitted to the ceiling and operated by a single pull-cord, the tumbler actually swinging over on pulling the cord. The chain by which this type of switch is operated is normally drawn back into the body of the switch by a short compression spring which is not required for our purpose and is removed. The switch is mounted face up on top of the gearbox, immediately above

the main shaft A, with a horizontal rocking arm passing over it.

This arm can be clearly seen in all the photographs 1 to 5 and the switch itself is visible in 1 and 2. The arm is pivoted above the left side (looking towards the subject) of the gearbox. A rigid link connects the plunger of the switch to a point on the rocking arm above it, so that the action of rocking the arm operates the switch. The extreme left hand end of the arm is drawn down by a tension spring, so that the plunger of the switch is normally maintained in its outward position.

From the right hand end of the arm there passes downwards a connecting rod, easily seen in photographs 1 to 4 and Fig. 1, the lower end of which is connected to a crank pin of $\frac{1}{2}$ " throw on a wheel, almost on the end of the main shaft A. This wheel is free to turn on the shaft and is not driven directly by it. At the extreme end of the shaft is a collar R which serves to retain the wheel on the shaft, and

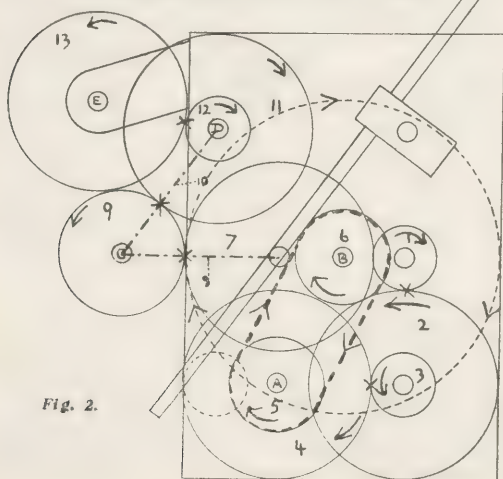


Fig. 2.

A Super

A Picture Tour Round A.C.W. Readers' Miniature Theatre



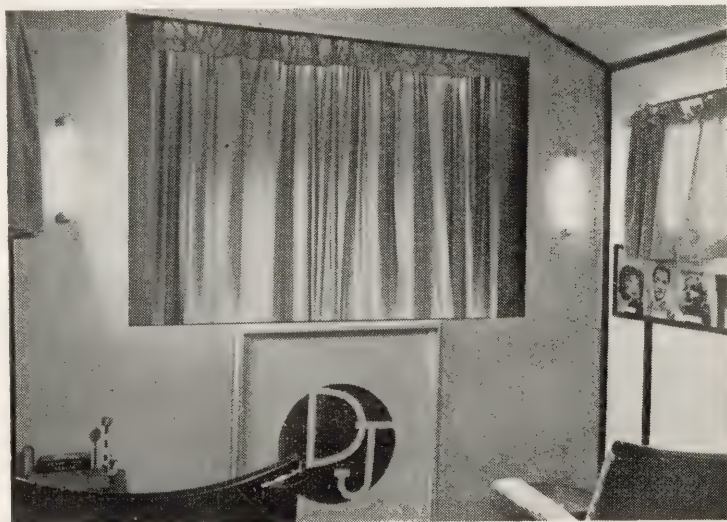
the screen give colour mixing. A magic lantern with a colour wheel is used for flooding the curtains from the front and also for spot-lighting the organist.

In this photograph the organ is not seen; it has descended to the depths, in accordance with accepted practice. It is shown in use in the photograph above. The organist can be made to swivel round to 'address' the audience.

There are nine tip-up seats in the auditorium. The walls, in pastel pink, are

THE photographs on these pages show the remarkable miniature cinema built by two "A.C.W." readers, D. and J. Scrimgeour, of Saxmundham. The proscenium is seen below. There are two sets of curtains, the second set being of the festoon type. Rows of lights at top and bottom of

Details of the photographs on these pages are given in the accompanying notes. A photograph showing part of the auditorium is reproduced on page 85.



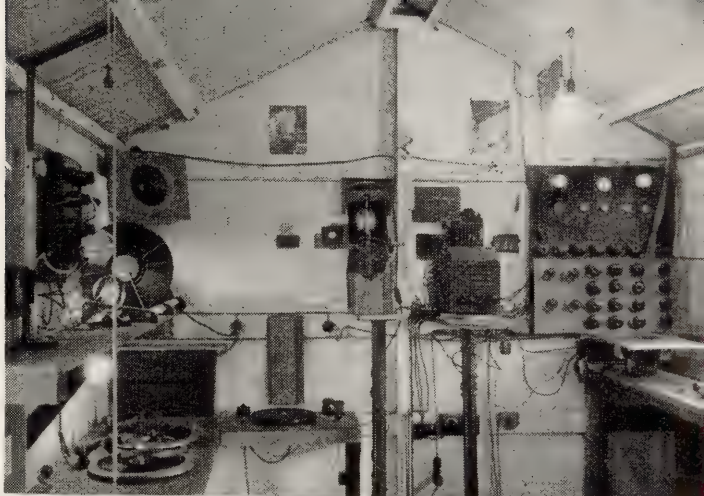
Home Cinema

decorated with frescoes of photographs of famous film stars, and the chairs are orange.

A full view of the projection box is seen at the top of this page. On the right are the switches for the coloured lights. The magic lantern, to the left of the projector, is raised to throw a spot on the organist. Top left is the pilot speaker for non-sync., the amplifier for which is just beyond the second turntable. The pilot speaker for sound films is lying on the bench on the right, undergoing adjustment.

The control panel for non-sync. is featured in the second photograph, with the lantern at top right. There are two record racks. The records to be played are put, in the correct order, in one rack and, after they have been played, are placed in the other, so that they are ready for immediate use for the next show. Pathe 9.5mm. sound is used. The theatre is housed in a building only 12 ft. by 8 ft.

Both the Scrimgeour brothers are now serving in the Forces, one of them being in Egypt, but one guesses that they still think with pleasure of this admirable little cinema. The monogram, "D.J.," on the speaker fret below the curtains stands, by the way, for "Deanjay," the "trade" name for their own productions, for, of course, they make their own films as well as show them.



THE CANADIAN SCENE

Readers wishing to borrow the Canadian National Railways 16mm. films should note that they can now only be obtained through the Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, South Kensington, London, S.W. The films include "Gem of the Rockies" (2 reels)—along the Pochontas Big Game Trail; "Down the Spanish Main" (2 reels); "Hunter's Paradise" (1 reel)—big game hunting in the territory surrounding Jasper National Park; "Big Game Trails" (2 reels); "Teddy Bear Family" (1 reel)—life of the tame bears in the Jasper National Park; "Fishing Across Canada" (5 reels); "Power" (1 reel)—developments in motive power on the C.N.R., showing construction and operation of giant locomotives; "Region of Delight" (1 reel)—Lake of Bays area in the Highlands of Ontario, "Among the 30,000 Islands" (1 reel)—beautiful scenery in the island-dotted waters of Georgian Bay, Lake Huron, Ontario and in Beausoleil National Park; "Canada's Metropolis" (1 reel)—aspects of Montreal; "Algonquin Adventures" (1 reel)—angler's and camper's paradise at Algonquin Park, Ontario; "Lake of Enchantment" (1 reel)—Maligne Lake section of Jasper National Park.

The Triumph of 16mm.

The New Standard of Substandard

By **ANDREW BUCHANAN**

IT does not seem so very long ago when 16mm. films were ignored by the professional industry, and belonged exclusively to amateurs. I well remember references to the clever way in which amateurs were making all kinds of films, including studio productions, for a mere pittance, and 'on a shoe-string,' which, in view of the appearance of 16mm. stock, would be more accurately described as 'on a boot-lace'!

As you remember, for several years I have had the good fortune to help adjudicate in the A.C.W. Annual Competition for the Ten Best Films, and I was thus enabled to study the steady advance of substandard production. Amateurs meant business—not the crazy kind of business for which professionals are noted, but the business of putting all they knew into their extremely economical film-making. So excellent were many of the results that one immediately forgot the size of the film stock, the limitations of the producers, and all the rest of it.

Time Has Shown

These films were silent, of course, but I remember saying to a fellow adjudicator some years back that when experiments in the recording and the projecting of 16mm. sound advanced, we should see a wide recognition of substandard production—wider than perhaps we could visualise at that moment. Time has shown the recognition to be even wider than that!

Apart from the pleasure I used to derive from so studying amateur productions, which was during the period I was regularly making the Gaumont British Magazine, I was interested to see that large libraries were being built up of 16mm. versions of 35mm. professional productions for hiring to private users, and so on. Incidentally, all my Cinemagazines were reduced to 16mm. for this purpose, as well as numerous features. Perhaps the improvement in the projection of 16mm. films, silent and sound, has been the main contributory factor to their wide recognition, economy and portability being the most important assets.

Long before the war, running parallel to the ever-improving quality of amateur productions, was the increasing use of 16mm. by educational and scientific bodies. Also, certain medical institutions were finding

film records of research work invaluable, and microcinematography was especially prized, for it overcame many teaching difficulties. However, despite the considerable improvement in 16mm. sound films, a great many bodies continued to give preference to the silent tuition film, for these enabled teachers to describe the films, whereas commentators superseded the 'personal touch.'

Yet another channel was being developed—the use of 16mm. by industry, films being utilised both as 'salesmen' and instructors in numerous industrial processes. Thus, entertainment in the home, teaching in schools and scientific institutions, and the uses it was put to by industry and commerce were bringing 16mm. to the fore, in spheres altogether beyond the reach of 35mm., though we should never overlook the fact that a very large number of such films were reduced from 35mm., which leads us to the interesting fact that it was with the coming of the war, and the demand for propaganda, that the most important advance in 16mm. was made.

Significant Recognition

The most prominent and significant recognition came from the Ministry of Information, which established a "non-theatrical" film department, under the control of prominent documentalists, which caters for the distribution of countless productions, all 16mm., throughout the nation, not only in remote places beyond the reach of cinemas, but in towns and cities, too. The programmes shown consist of short films; mainly of an informative nature, and the point of greatest interest to amateurs is that they are all made by the most prominent directors in the country. Although these men work on 35mm., their productions only reach the public in 16mm. form.

Obviously the reason why 35mm. is employed in the first instance is because professionals not only find it easier to work with standard film—their entire equipment being made for the manipulation of 35mm.—but also the films thus made have a dual purpose, for whereas 35mm. can be perfectly reduced to 16mm., 16mm. cannot satisfactorily be enlarged to 35mm. Many of the Ministry's productions are designed to

The war has brought a widespread professional use of 16mm. and, since the amateur is far more experienced in working in 16mm. than the professional, the way is open for him to make films which stand a good chance of nation-wide distribution, says Andrew Buchanan in this, his fifth article on the New Order in films.

cater for both theatrical and non-theatrical audiences, so that a shortened version of a non-theatrical short might possibly be released to cinemas demanding 35mm. ; but if production had been on 16mm. in the first instance, this would not be practical. Personally, I prefer to cut a 35mm. to a 16mm. film, but only because my experience is largely with the former.

The non-theatrical distribution vogue has been extended to such unusual places as the crypts of churches, shelters beneath railway arches and cellars under city stores. "Shelter Film Shows," offering programmes mingling entertainment with lessons on how to keep fit and avoid infection, were widespread throughout last winter, and only the present extension of daylight until nearly midnight has temporarily suspended them.

First Film of its Type

The Ministry's shows are on a larger scale, in halls which are carefully selected, and the programmes are arranged to avoid conflict or repetition with commercial cinemas. Since the outbreak of the war, I have produced a number of such films, and a brief description of them will enable you to visualise the important uses to which 16mm. is employed. My first "16mm." film was specially designed for non-theatrical circulation, and was called "Religion and the People," the purpose being to show the social work of the various denominations, and how they were collectively contributing to the welfare of the people.

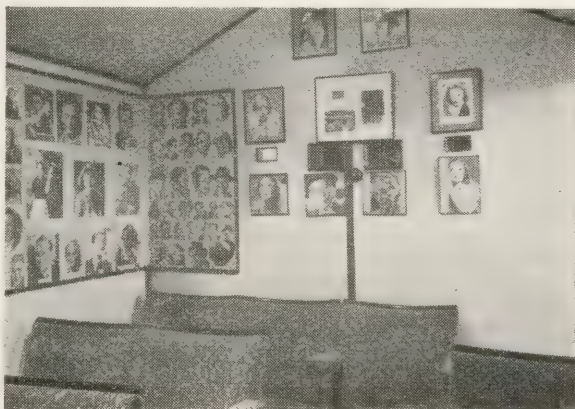
It was necessary, of course, to create the widest possible appeal, and to give equal prominence to each of the denominations, for the audiences would naturally be composed of all types of people. I believe this was the first film ever made which attempted, and, I think, succeeded, in grouping together the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Free Churches, and the Synagogues.

I selected prominent activities of each: the splendid work of the Seamen's Mission became the Church of England's contribution—the Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth represented the Roman Catholic Church—the great West Ham Mission (an oasis of particular beauty in an area of particular drabness) symbolised the work of the Free Churches—a fine club and social centre run by the United Synagogues in the East End was their representation. Into the latter sequence I included a service in the Great Synagogue in the City, showing the interesting ritual before the Ark.

This film involved shooting of every description: river exteriors, vast churches, tiny rooms, operation theatres and private chapels, and it is a good example of production designed for and circulated to audiences quite distinct from cinemas, but composed of people who, of course, frequent the latter. But we need to remember that non-theatrical audiences are mainly composed of those who form cinema audiences, and who are, therefore, accustomed to professional standards of quality.

Reverting to my own films, in contrast to the above production was another called "Silage," designed primarily to show farmers how to conserve summer grass for the winter—a film which was also of value to the lay public, for it emphasised the vital part played by the farm in the life of the community.

Again, in contrast, was "Simplified First Aid," which offered quite a new approach to the subject, and dispelled from the mind the usual bewilderment felt when one is



Part of the auditorium of the miniature cinema illustrated on pages 82-83. The photographs round the walls are of film stars.

Cinema

16mm. Films on Full Size Cinema Screen

confronted with bandages, dressings and a need to treat an accident. It showed that an unqualified person can, with knowledge, handle wounds and emergency cases without equipment: walking sticks for splints—scarfs for slings—paper for dressings, and so on. Instead of showing 'fake' wounds, or persuading people to be knocked about to enable me to show real ones, I marked limbs with black crosses and circles to indicate exactly where the injured parts were.

I have referred to these three widely contrasting films to give some idea of the scope of 16mm. and the great service it is now rendering. Cinemas could not possibly show such films, for they *intentionally* lack the essential and familiar 'dramatic' note necessary for a programme designed to entertain, and their length, and the *detail* they contain, suits them for audiences who know beforehand that they are not going to see a musical comedy.

Never before has such an advance been made as with 16mm. Never before has there been such recognition of a medium which, by strange coincidence, has for long been the medium of the amateur. Now the world is encircled by 16mm., and it is the film of the future.

Where does colour come in? It comes in from every side, and the ground is already being prepared for professional productions to be made direct on 16mm. At this moment, vital (and very lovely) scientific films are being produced *direct on 16mm., with sound*, too, and there will be many more.

Great Opportunities

Now what can the amateur be feeling and thinking about this incursion into his special domain—this recognising of the kind of film which, by *necessity*, he worked in years before the nation recognised its value? He will, I think, be delighted. More than that, he will see himself surrounded by opportunities exceeding his wildest dreams, for once upon a time he made films solely for pleasure, with little if any hope of their being seen by the world at large, principally because they were 16mm.

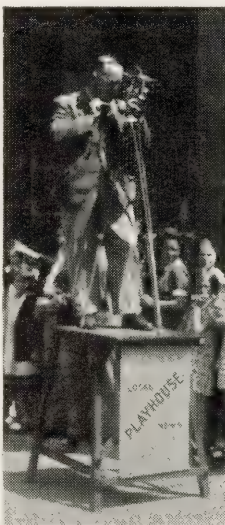
Now, the amateur, *far more experienced in working in 16mm. than the professional*, can, with the same amount of pleasure, plan and make films which should stand a good chance of nation-wide distribution if the subject matter is of general interest and importance. He can make films of real service to the community, and as for the future, I have every reason to think that 16mm. offers a profession which will grow as rapidly as 35mm., and infinitely more sanely because it will be catering for purposes other than entertainment.

A CINEMA manager in a Lincolnshire market town hit the headlines of a national paper recently with the local newsreel which he has been making for several years past. He has also made two A.R.P. propaganda films which are being shown locally: one on incendiary bombs, and the other on the theme, "Don't forget your gasmask." He projects these 16mm. films on the full-size screen of his 600-seater cinema, and also takes them on tour round the halls of neighbouring villages.

The details of how Mr. G. H. Hallam, the enterprising cinema manager, has brought 16mm. films to a 35mm. screen are, I believe, of wide interest. He and his assistant, Mr. E. B. Rawlings, have two Paillard-Bolex cameras equipped with 15mm. f/1.5, in. f/1.4 and in., 2in., 3in. and 6in. lenses. All these are in duplicate so that two complete sets of camera equipment can be mobilized. It is therefore possible for a local news event such as War Weapons Week or the church parade of the local Home Guard to be photographed from several angles. It was found that filters reduce the illumination of the image reaching the film too much for general use. (This trouble is also found

in 35mm. newsreel work). An exposure meter is always used—a Weston.

All the films are made on Kodak 16mm. neg.-pos. By special arrangement Mr. Hallam was able, before the war, to get the film processed within a day. Interest films in Kodachrome of local beauty spots have also proved very successful. For indoor shots Kodak Double X is used.



Mr. Hallam films his own newsreel for showing at his own cinema.

Manager Shows Substandard

By WILLIAM E. DICK

Tripods, steps and various stands and platforms—as well as one moving platform used for trucking shots—complete the equipment.

In editing Mr. Hallam does not try anything fancy, but relies entirely on straight cuts. Incidentally, an old A.C.W. tip about putting individual sequences into numbered boxes has proved very handy. Titles are photographed on positive stock and processed at the cinema, so that they are ready when the rest of the film comes back from processing. In this type of newsreel work there is no time to shoot the titles and then send them away for processing.

Projection involves a throw of 80 feet on to a screen, 16' 6" x 12' 6". First of all a 1,000-watt lamp was tried out in 16mm. projector, but even this did not give an illumination sufficiently brilliant to stand comparison with the arc illumination used with standard 35mm. projection. Only an arc could provide the intense light required. So the back of a Ditmar projector was detached, leaving the gate open and enabling an arc lamp to be placed behind it.

A Problem of Cooling

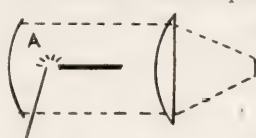
The first arc used was a standard arc as used for ordinary 35mm. projection. This proved too strong; the heat was so fierce that it buckled the shutter blades, damaged the film and took the temper out of the springs of the projector. So the next problem was to find a method of cooling the whole projection apparatus. Hairdryers helped a great deal, directing a draught of cool air straight on to the projector, but the existing fan of the Ditmar now does the trick, a cowl having been fixed over the fan which now directs a current of cool air directly on to the gate.

The original concave mirror of the arc did not focus a beam suitable for 16mm. film. Indeed, it was found that, using this mirror, it was impossible to bring the beam to a size less than that which would cover a half-crown; it needed to be got down to the approximate size of a sixpence. This meant a long search through catalogues and the stocks of second-hand dealers.

Eventually a suitable mirror was discovered. It had been designed for use with a special type of arc. A hole was drilled in the centre of the mirror so that one carbon

could be inserted right through the mirror. It is now possible, with this new arrangement of mirror and carbons, to use high intensity carbons, a 6mm. carbon for the positive, and 5mm. for the negative. The arc carbon which burns away most quickly has to be fed by hand. This arc works perfectly, using 35-40 amps on an input voltage of 70 volts. (The arc voltage is variable, around 30 volts).

One trouble, however, remained. In winter the metal surfaces in the projection box are colder than the general atmosphere of the box, so that the projector lens became



A. Original arc arrangement



B. Arc arrangement as used in Ditmar projector for show—about a quarter in 16mm. on 35mm. screen.

steamed over and beads of water condensed on the gate itself. These beads of water showed quite clearly on the screen and gave the film a queer scalloped edge. To overcome this defect an ordinary bowl electric fire is switched on of an hour before the film is to be shown. There is also one other advantage in this trick, for as the projector is warmed up before it is run, it starts and continues to run at a constant speed. Variation of speed was formerly a curse when sound effects and commentary had to be synchronised with the films.

A commentary is written to fit each film, and is spoken through a microphone with music and sound effects as a background worked from dual turntables. Ordinarily three people are required in the projection box: one on the projector, one to manage the turntables and another at the mike.

In his latest film Mr. Hallam, the Mayor of Louth and the local barber all played parts. They were filmed as they spoke certain set lines. When the film was shown Mr. Hallam and the barber spoke their lines into the mike to synchronise with the film, while Mr. Rawlings deputised for the Mayor.

Of course, with this necessarily makeshift method mistakes are bound to occur occasionally. On one 'never-to-be-forgotten occasion a record of "Come to the Cookhouse Door, Boys!" was put on instead of "The Last Post." But as to the general success of the venture there can be no doubt.

FAMOUS LIBRARY FILMS : No. 9

"The Italian"

de Paille d'Italie is certainly among the half dozen or so films that really count.

After one more silent film, *Les Deux Timides* (again much trick photography) René Clair won fame with *Sous les Toits de Paris* (Albert Prejean), *Le Million* (Annabella), the superb *A Nous la Liberté* (1931); then, later, *The Ghost Goes West* (for Alexander Korda at Denham, with Robert Donat, in 1935). This last might have been by any competent director, only traces of Clair wit being noticeable. He is now in Hollywood. (See p. 96).

The plea for intelligence, for rising above petty worries like lost gloves, for refusing to be constrained by petty convention, make *The Italian Straw Hat* a crusader in human propaganda. The sublimely naturalistic sets, the superb uniformity of the acting, and the flawless action continuity are the measure of René Clair's technical proficiency. The photography is purely objective, lighting is "all-over," focus is hard throughout, in the American style. As will be illustrated in the analysis which follows, Clair is the master of straight narrative development with unobtrusive technical skill, ingeniously interpreting narrative by means of characters and action that afford witty commentaries on pomp, convention and officialdom, which makes his work such a powerful satire.

The trade paper, "The Cinema" of 9/1/1930, summarized the film thus:

Production ..	Albatros-Sequana, Paris, 1928
Trade Review ..	Jan. 9th, 1930. Handled by the Film Society
Length ..	6,000 feet
Directed by ..	René Clair
Scenario ..	René Clair
Film Editor ..	Henri Dobb
Photography ..	Maurice Desfassiaux, Nicolas Rondakoff
Design ..	Lazare Meerson
Derivation ..	Stage play by d'Eugene Labiche and Marc Michel
Substandard Availability ..	Patheoscope Library, 2 S. reels of 9.5mm., equivalent to about 2,000 feet of 35mm., as <i>The Leghorn Hat</i> .
The Leading Characters, in their order of appearance:	
The Bride's Uncle ..	Alexis Bondi
(troublesome tie)	
The Bride's Aunt ..	Alice Tissot
(anxious organiser)	
The Bride ..	Maryse Maia
(charmingly unruffled)	
The Bride's Father ..	M. Yvonneck
(tight shoes)	
The Bride's Cousin Bobby ..	M. Pre, Jr.
(lost glove)	
Ferdinand, the Bridegroom ..	Albert Prejean
(not carefree)	
Madame Maupherthus ..	Olga Tschechowa
(owner of the hat)	
The Soldier ..	Vital Geymond
(unsubtle but determined)	
Ferdinand's valet ..	Alex Allin
(imperturbably nonchalant)	
Uncle Vezinet ..	Paul Olivier
(rather hard of hearing)	
The Mayor ..	M. Volbert
(piqued by the irregularities)	
M. Maupherthus ..	Jim Gerald
(distinctly puzzled)	
The Time and Place ..	Paris, 1895

THE *Italian Straw Hat* is a comedy of manners, a superlatively witty and brilliant satire on the petty conventionalism of the French bourgeoisie of the 1890's. It positively overflows with what are now known as "typical Lubitsch touches." Each one of the players has a definite characteristic, as will be noted from the cast list, and there is also the sublime inspiration of making the bride (properly the central figure) a mere cog, whereas the expectedly obscure deaf Uncle is continually caught up into prominence and ultimately provides the solution to what must be the most hectically complex triviality ever conceived.

René Clair, one-time journalist on *L'Intransigeant*, passed through phases of acting and managing till 1922, when he directed his first film, *The Crazy Ray* (Paris qui dort). This and its successor, *Entr'acte*, were witty, had an undercurrent of social commentary, and were full of trick photography. Four others preceded *The Italian Straw Hat*, about which William Hunter in "Scrutiny of Cinema" aptly writes:

Clair has achieved a remarkable success by a delicacy of wit and an admirable use of a medium over which he has a mature control. *Le Chapeau*



The opening sequence. The bride watches her father greet her aunt; uncle looks on. Tight shoes are well in evidence. Note detailed set with draperies and crowded walls.

Albert Prejean struggles with millinery. Another detailed set with "all-over" lighting and backspots on the two foreground figures for depth.

"Straw Hat"

A Critical Commentary

By

**H. A. V. BULLEID,
M.A.**



Delightful social irony and hilarious situation welded into divertingly sustained comedy. Amusing characterizations which are ironic criticisms. Witty situations and deft development. Quite dependable light entertainment for high-class halls.

The film opens briskly with the introduction of the bride's aunt and uncle, who have just arrived; then we see the bride and, carrying his new shoes, the bride's father: they beg him to hurry; his cousin and another arrival assist him with his shoes . . . The abbreviated version makes it hard to pick up the foibles given to each character, as listed in the cast above, but the traditional greeting becomes uproariously funny through sheer repetition.

Meanwhile, in sparkling tracking shots, the bridegroom (Albert Prejean) drives in the Bois de Vincennes till his whip catches in a tree; and while he runs back to recover it his horse finds, and starts eating, a straw hat. He is dismayed; and more so at the indignant cry of a soldier who appears just in the wood, and the agonized cry of a lady (Olga Tschechowa) who appears a moment later. Apologetically handing back the hat, he hurries off, twirling his whip again, till he recalls the danger . . . the others hail a providential carriage and give chase.

Impeccable Acting

As is the case throughout, the acting is impeccable and the photography objectively brilliant, the crowning point of interest lying in the subtle wit of the director. This is a film from which one obtains entertainment (above the normal, obvious, narrative entertainment) in proportion to the amount of thought one applies: thus, in the mid shot of the horse cheerfully eating the hat, one can read the animal's thought: "If women persist in wearing perfectly good food on their heads, they must expect occasional misunderstandings."

The bridegroom arrives at his new home, is let in by his valet, and meets deaf uncle Vezinet—two more well-defined types. His

pursuers drive up as his carriage is led away, and they enter his house (shutting out a small but enthusiastic crowd who sense drama—another tasty aside). Then, very neatly arranged . . .

C.S. photograph of a girl (the bride)

C.S. Bridegroom smiles pleasedly at it: then frowns, looks up and round, frowns still more at . . .

M.S. Madame (wearing wrecked hat), then soldier, who enter room.

L.S. The carriages drive up (one assisted by barking dog)

M.S. Soldier expostulates, but is shown, at window (first floor) . . .

L.S. (looking down, from window) a perfect orgy of kissing as massed relations meet. M.S.—and Ferdinand nonchalantly indicates that he's the bridegroom—a scathingly sarcastic revelation of the obvious.

. . . and then the intruders have to be swept into the bedroom beyond for concealment as the father (tight shoes) enters, followed by the bride (charmingly unruffled) and her cousin (still feeling for his lost glove).

Ferdinand approaches his bride but is swept back by the father—a magnificent gesture, implicitly stating: "Time for all that later." He then looks at his watch and raises his eyes to heaven. In the next room, Madame faints. Ferdinand gets rid of the others. Uncle Vezinet has heard and seen nothing: Ferdinand thoughtfully plugs his ear-trumpet, and resumes arguments with the soldier, who explains that Madame cannot return to her husband without a whole hat.

Then follows an uproarious sequence, with the soldier's increasing violence, Madame's continual fainting, the valet's entrances and horror, and Uncle Vezinet, sublimely unaware of any irregularity. The latter is shown in several shots, very appropriately cut-in as repetition laugh-raisers, dozing serenely amid the turmoil. Then he walks out, is besieged by vain questions from the relations: and



A study in expressions: Vital Geymond, Olga Tschechowa (pronounced 'check-ova') and Albert Prejean.

the father stalks in and drags out Ferdinand while the two are concealed behind the doors.

At the Town Hall, Ferdinand spies a milliners shop before entering: so, when the Mayor does not immediately arrive, he sprints out to it.

Then...

L.S. The Mayor enters the hall: all stand.

He sits down, all sit down.

M.S. Ferdinand's chair, occupied by hat and gloves only: (action of sitting down continued in background)

C.S. The Mayor looks at the empty chair

M.S. The father speaks to him with an anguished gesture... then dashes to the milliners and grabs Ferdinand who just manages to get the address of the customer who had the last leghorn hat stocked... The narrative content of the four shots above quoted is remarkable, only equalled in directorial inspiration by their comedy content.

Ripe Guying

The civic ceremony culminates in the moving, enjoyed, and trite homily delivered with a wealth of gesture by the Mayor. These facets are ripely guyed by Clair's direction, the more subtle guying being backed up by a heartily-played gag as the uncle's tie comes adrift and everyone mis-applies the aunt's frenzied gestures. His yell as she finally pinches his arm can almost be heard. Then the impatient Ferdinand breaks into applause at what might have been, but obviously was not, the end of the Mayor's speech, and leads the way out, so all must follow—except Uncle Vezinet who claps tardily and, when accused of ill manners, courteously accepts the imagined congratulations.

The reception proceeds with singing and dancing, and Ferdinand extremely worried, till his valet enters and looks so lugubriously

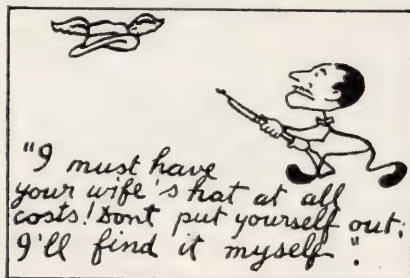
gloomy, that he imagines, in a model-shot flash-back, the total wreck of his new home: so he dashes off to the address obtained from the milliner.

His entrance here is nicely portrayed: in close-up his head pokes round the door, he sees... mid shot, a screen: over it hang trousers, and from it protrude two bare feet, wriggling. Then to the audience is given a view round the screen, of M. Mauperthuis (Jim Gerald) taking his footbath. Ferdinand demands the hat, the dialogue title concerned being that one reproduced herewith. These titles, accompanied by apt cartoons, were apparently reproduced specially for the 9.5mm. version by the Pathé Paris office, since the English 35mm. version of the film had conventional printed titles.

The Identity of the Lady

The relations have followed Ferdinand: and the father, clutching his plant and walking slightly unsteadily, for the party was good, enters and sees the feet behind the screen (now being briskly dried) and also sees the pair of shoes, which he deliberately puts on, with a sigh of relief: and totters out. And the enraged M. Mauperthuis mutteringly crams on the wrong 'uns, and dashes upstairs, to corner Ferdinand with two pistols in the bedroom: but Ferdinand tells the whole story, in lengthy titles since unfortunately the recounting sequence, done in pantomime against stage backdrops (a witty idea) has been cut. It dawns (heavily over-emphasized in close-ups of the woman, the soldier and the hat) on Monsieur that his lady may be involved, and the fact is brought home forcefully when Ferdinand knocks over a photograph which, to his horror, shows whose wife is in his house: and then M. Mauperthuis sprints off to the house, and Ferdinand sprints after him.

Night falls as the relations reach the house and are refused admittance by the valet "while the lady is there": this proves too much for the father who declares the



A typical sub-title with cartoon—unusual departure from the convention of formal printing.

marriage off and goes to collect the presents ; Ferdinand protests but Uncle Vezinet opens his—to reveal a leghorn hat : in ecstasy Ferdinand snatches up the box and dashes into the house, while the gendarmes round up the relations and take them to the police station as suspicious characters !

Inside his house, Ferdinand opens the box. It is empty. Uncle V. still had the hat . . . but M. Mauperthuis bursts in, and the two escape to the street, and the soldier "knows one of the gendarmes" and recovers the hat : but it falls on a lamp and Ferdinand screens M. Mauperthuis with an umbrella, claiming rain, while it is recovered and Madame is sent away . . .

The released relations are intrigued at the bride's account of her husband's gallantry : M. Mauperthuis returns to find his wife in bed, and is left with a single doubt and a pair of tight shoes : and the young couple return to normal.

Clever Montage

René Clair's selection and composition of material is so good that much of the montage ingenuity must be attributed to him, though a technician is named as editor. For instance, the entry of M. Mauperthuis at Ferdinand's house is neat : one long shot of the stairs shows the latter start down, turn hurriedly back : then M. Mauperthuis appears. This holding of a shot for supplementary action is now associated with Lubitsch and his shots of doors, but actually dates from the 1914 Keystone comedy period and was used by Chaplin, for example, in *Easy Street* (1917).

Further examples of Clair's feeling for the narrative image—that is, pictorial counterpoint used to describe action, are the scenario passages quoted, as well as such sublime moments as when the Mayor stands with his most telling gesture nipped in the bud ; and the feet are seen behind the screen : these cases all depend for their unusual power on the intercutting of shots with conflicting contents.

Clair as the scenario writer must be commended chiefly for his generous loading of every sequence with details and gags : thus, in addition to the plain action content of the father's chase to the milliner's shop we have the glimpse of the assistant in Ferdinand's arms as the door opens and also the aside of the father treading heavily on the other lady's new hat. Here (though

none of the critics dared say it) Clair has learned from Harold Lloyd, whose silent films were constructed from the cream of a superabundance of gags and situations contrived by his staff.

The acting is so uniformly excellent that one can hardly credit the players being other than types ; some will be remembered in delightfully obscure small parts in Clair's French talkies. Olga Tschechowa came to England for *Moulin Rouge* (1928, by E. A. Dupont) and in 1930 was in UFA's *Drei von der Tankstelle*, shown in England as *Chimen du Paradis* (with Lillian Harvey).

The Italian Straw Hat is a film on which one can think back with many a casual



Jim Gerald (left) anxiously battles for his trousers (a hearty detail missing from the available version)

chuckle, so steeped is it with sly but wholesome and constructively useful wit. For after all, the damaged hat *could* be explained ; the wedding day *was* a success in spite of the trouble ; there *was* an identical hat lying in Ferdinand's room all the time ; and the *only* person left in doubt at the end was the *only* one who had been aggressively suspicious. On the thoughtful interlacing of such relevant wit with its properly cinematic action-interpretation does the constructional perfection of this excellent film depend.

(See also "René Clair in Hollywood" [page 96], in which is analysed his latest film, "The Flame of New Orleans," featuring Marlene Dietrich. The next in the "Famous Library Films" series will be "Faust," a very detailed commentary, profusely illustrated with shots from the film).

DO IT YOURSELF!

practical ideas for the handyman

A Direct Vision Viewfinder

CAMERA viewfinders seem to have run in fashions. First came the "watch for the dickie bird" model, in which the photographer buried himself under a voluminous black cloth to examine the image cast by the lens on the ground glass screen. The advent of the smaller "snapshot" hand camera called for something less cumbersome.

The first "waist level" viewfinder was designed along similar lines. An auxiliary lens was arranged to cast an image through a mirror against the underside of a miniature screen located on the top of the camera. The operator's hand, cupped round the glass, replaced the cloth in excluding some of the external light, enabling the image to be seen.

Then came the "brilliant" finder, a combination of convex lens, mirror and concave lens through which a reduced but brilliant image of the view to be photographed could be seen. This system, by using a concave lens only, and the scene then viewed directly through it, has attained a new popularity with the arrival of the modern substandard cine camera. The "peephole and wire frame" type, developed in the still camera for quick, accurate snapshotting, has not, apparently, appealed to the manufacturer of cine cameras.

Yet this form of finder achieved rapid popularity in still cameras, particularly with Press photographers, simply because they are able to watch the actual scene, full size,

Each month our contributor supplies worthwhile practical ideas: things to make and things to do. Suggestions for gadgets are welcomed.

By
G. A.
GAULD,
B.Sc.



Fig. 1

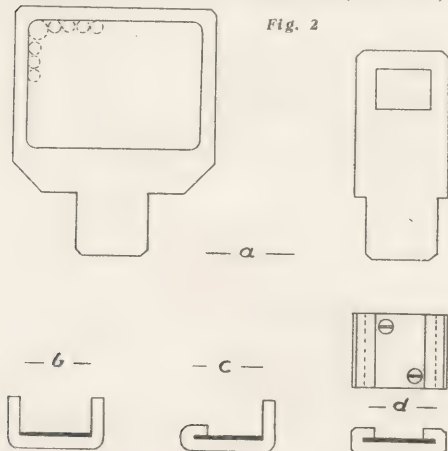
when every movement and gesture can be observed so that the picture is secured at exactly the right moment. I can no more imagine a Press camera with a reducing finder than I can a rifle with reducing sights. Whenever critical aiming and accurate observation are called for, the direct view of the human eye cannot be beaten.

Unfortunately, the modern cine cameras are short in length and the wire frame of the direct viewfinder is consequently too near the eye to be seen clearly. Nevertheless, if the frame is made of metal about one-eighth of an inch wide and preferably painted black, it can be seen sufficiently distinctly for all practical purposes. Once the reader has tried it out on his camera, I am sure he will find it to be one of the most satisfying gadgets he has ever made.

The photograph, Fig. 1, shows this type of finder fitted to the Dekko camera. It will be noted that the frame slips into a clip on the front of the camera above the lens and that there is another similar clip on the side. This is done so that interchangeable frames may be used with lenses of varying focal lengths. The frame for use with the standard lens is slipped into the clip on the side of the camera when it is packed into its case and not in use.

When there is no handle on the top of the camera to get in the way, a hinged fitting may be used, fixed in such a manner (as I shall describe later) that the base of the sight is lengthened by an inch or so, a desirable

Fig. 2



feature if the camera is only some five or six inches long. A grid may be added to form an inner frame corresponding to the telephoto lens which is normally used. In both types, parallax adjustment is provided by mounting the peep-hole eyepiece in a sliding fitting.

When the length of the base (i.e., the distance between the frame and peep-hole) has been settled, the size of the frame opening for the standard lens may be determined. This may be calculated or checked by direct observation, either by comparing the view with the image cast on a piece of tissue paper placed in the gate opening, or by comparison with the image seen in the normal viewfinder.

The frame may then be cut out of a piece of stout and hard sheet brass by first drilling holes all round the inner edge, then cutting through the tangs and finishing with a file to the final shape as shown in Fig. 2a. Another interchangeable frame is shown on the right, the opening being one-third the size of the standard frame arranged to suit a one-inch lens. The other frame, therefore, gives the field of view for a three-inch telephoto.

Making the Clips

The clips are made from soft sheet brass, $1/16"$ thick. A template of the "tongue" on the frame is first made, a shade thicker and wider than the original. A strip is cut from the brass sheet of the required width, and the two sides bent up over the template, as shown in Fig. 2b. The corners are then cleaned out square with a fine file. Next, with the template in place, the sides are beaten over, Fig. 2c, and finally, the clip is cleaned up with a file to the shape in Fig. 2d. The clip may be squeezed up or prised open until the frame slips in just tight. It is finished by drilling two holes to take No. 10 B.A. countersink screws, which are driven into holes, drilled and tapped into the bakelite or metal body of the camera.

The hinged type of frame is shown in Fig. 3. The method of construction is similar, but sheet $1/16"$ thick is used. The actual shape of the links connecting the frame to the hinge pins may have to be modified to suit the particular camera in use, but it will be noted that, owing to the fixing being below the top of the camera, when erected, the frame is thrown forward, thus extending the baseline of the sight. The projection at the bottom should also be noted. This acts as a stop and should be so adjusted that when the frame is pulled up into position, it stops when upright and at right angles to the top of the camera.

In Fig. 3c it will be seen that the links are jointed into the frame. All the surfaces in contact are tinned with ordinary solder and

the links sweated in. To ensure accuracy, this operation should be carried out with the links fitted to the bracket. The bracket should be screwed to a temporary support, the links fitted and the frame sweated into place when correctly aligned and square. To make a sound job, the cheeks which carry the hinge pins should be notched and sweated into the back plate in a similar way. Two holes are drilled in the backplate to take the countersink fixing screws, which should again be No. 10 B.A.

The grid for the telephoto lens may be formed by soldering on four wires. It does not, however, make a very satisfactory job; a far neater if somewhat laborious method is to form the grid as in Fig. 3d. Narrow

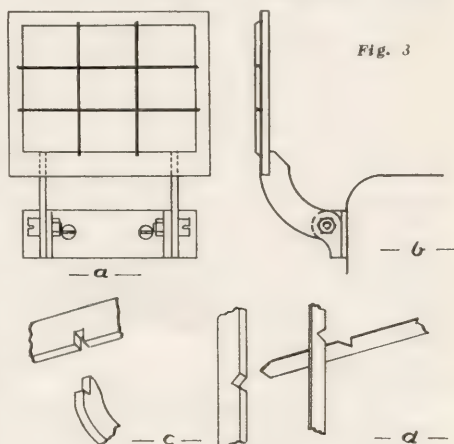


Fig. 3

strips of thin sheet brass are cut and notched at the intersections. Similarly, the eight points at which they join the frame are notched. After all these points have been "tinned," the connections are made with solder run in to fill the notches. Care must be taken not to melt a completed joint when running an adjacent one. The iron must not be too hot; completed joints can be protected with a damp cloth.

Finally, the joints are cleaned up flush with a file and after painting, a most professional-looking job is obtained. The joints will be strengthened if the frame is finished by chromium plating, but the face of the frame nearest to the eye should be blacked over, as the brilliant plating is both distracting and tiring to the observer.

Whatever type of frame is used, a sliding type of peep-hole should be fitted in order to provide an adjustment for the parallax between the axis of the lens and the line of sight through the viewfinder. The method of constructing the clip is similar to that of

the clip for the first type of frame. A template of the sliding strip, Fig. 4a, is made and the sides of the clip folded up over it, as shown in Fig. 4c. The centre portion is filed away (Fig. 4b) so that the clip grips at the top and bottom only. In this way a better and smoother grip is obtained, and the degree of tightness can be readily adjusted by closing or easing up the edges that are turned over.

The sliding strip (Fig. 4a) is made from hard brass strip, $\frac{3}{8}$ " wide by $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick, the edges being given a flat chamfer, making the clip neater since the edges do not have to be turned completely over. It will be found that the smallest peephole for a clear view is $5/32$ " dia. It should not be made any larger than is necessary, as accuracy of alignment will be correspondingly reduced.

The sight should be mounted on the back of the camera so that it slides on a line directly behind a line joining the centre of the lens and the centre of the frame. This may, or may not be vertical, as may be seen in Fig. 5. The infinity position should be given when the sight is drawn out to a point at which a line joining the peep-hole to the centre of the frame is parallel with the top of the camera. This should, however, be checked by direct observation, as the rule may not hold good in every case. This point is then etched on to the slide so that the mark coincides with the top edge of the clip.

Direct Observations

By setting up the camera on a rigid support, direct observations can be made on a target placed at definite distances between, say, twenty down to three feet. A piece of tissue paper is used in the camera gate and the target centred. The sight is then drawn out until the target is also seen to be centred in the frame. The point is etched in on the slide and the appropriate distance marked against it. Actually, a rough estimate on these lines should be carried out before the sliding sight is constructed, so that its approximate length may be determined.

Finally, it should be noted that these markings will only apply to one specific lens. If parallax correction is required for a telephoto lens as well, for a range of, say, six to fifty feet, then the slide will have to be calibrated in the same way with this lens and its appropriate frame or grid in place. The markings can be arranged on each edge of the slide, one set being inked in in black, the other in red.

Cutting off "heads" should be entirely eliminated in close-ups, provided the reader always remembers to "focus" the sight as well as the lens.

"IT HAPPENED TO ME"

I Got My Break

Readers are invited to contribute to this feature. The passport to publication is a novel, humorous or out-of-the-way movie experience.

LESS than a year ago I still harboured the hope that I would one day be pacing the floor of a professional studio. It was in 1936 that I first became interested in cine. I bought a hand-cranked Pathe and filmed almost everything that came my way. I used every available stock on the market—a mistake, as I since realised, for I believe that one should stick to one make and learn to know it thoroughly.

There was no cine society in my district, so I formed my own. It developed as United Film Productions and remains one of the few London cine societies still holding small but regular meetings. When out with the U.F.P. news-reel unit one day I met a real live professional cameraman and, getting into conversation with him, mentioned that I had recorded a number of sound effects on disc. Eventually he borrowed some of the records to be used in a film he was shooting. But he forgot to return them and it was with some trepidation that I decided to go along to the studio and ask for them back.

To my surprise I was admitted without any bother and even received a welcome from the studio manager. Then someone dashed

—a—



Fig. 4

—b—



—c—

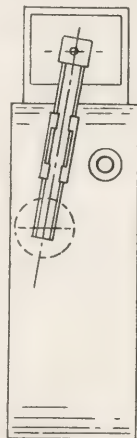


Fig. 5

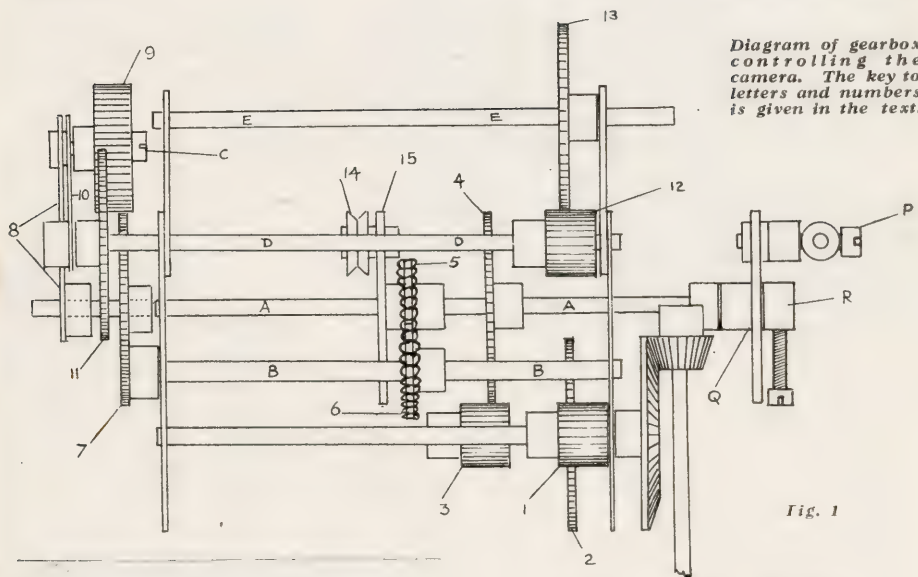


Diagram of gearbox controlling the camera. The key to letters and numbers is given in the text.

Fig. 1

into the room and phoned to another part of the building to ask for the telephone number of a firm manufacturing 16mm. sound projectors. I wondered why he should be doing this in a world of 35mm., and decided that nothing would be lost by asking. "We're giving a show of some of our 16mm. Ministry of Food shorts," he replied, "but no one knows how to work the projector."

Well, I did. I very soon got it working (as any amateur could have done) and a short time later left the place, with my records. It was not until I had got on to the bus that I discovered I had left my gas-mask behind. I went back for it, rather sheepishly—and ever since have made the journey every day, for I found a job waiting for me. They had searched high and low for 'that amateur bloke' who knew a little more about his side of the game than they did.

I have now achieved part of my ambition, for I am their first assistant cameraman; but without my amateur groundwork I should never have made the grade. A few weeks ago I shot my first exteriors on 35mm. for the M. of I film, "Empire Marches," and should like, if I may, to tell of my experiences later on.

The work has been hard and the hours long, but everyone at the studio has helped me a lot and given me many tips—the chief cameraman in particular. I have a long way to go yet and I am always learning; but I do not forget that I am still an ardent amateur at heart.

D. DENSHAM.

Filming Flowers (Continued)

this collar has a specially long set screw which drives the crank round.

The action of this part of the mechanism is thus as follows. The motor is in circuit with the two-way switch, and for the moment we will merely say that there is another two-way switch in the circuit, by which the motor is now started. Shaft A revolves slowly, and the long set screw in the collar referred to above drives the crank around, drawing down the right hand end of the rocking arm and pushing home the plunger of the switch. As soon as the crank pin P passes bottom dead centre, the spring connected to the rocking arm causes the wheel Q suddenly to slip round, and the switch plunger is pulled out, stopping the motor. Thus every time the motor is started by the second two-way switch, the shaft A makes exactly one revolution and then stops.

On shaft A between the side plates of the gearbox is mounted a wheel 15 which bears near its circumference a roller 14. Pivoted so as to swing to and fro in the direction of the axis of the lens is a long arm which can be seen projecting up from the gearbox and connected by the pull rod to the hoods. The lower end of this arm passes in front of the shaft A and the roller 14 bears against it so as to swing it back and open the shutters against the pull of the weighted cord. The position of wheel 15 is adjusted so that when the apparatus stops, the hoods are wide open.

(To be continued next month)

René Clair in Hollywood

Has he lost his touch? The critics are undecided

By ERNEST LINDGREN

(Curator, National Film Library)

AMONG the twenty-odd releases for the month known at the time of writing, there really is only one film which merits any detailed consideration at all, and that is René Clair's long-awaited American effort, *The Flame of New Orleans* (G.F.D.).

The fact that it has thrown the Press critics into some measure of contradiction alone would give it a certain interest. "*The Flame of New Orleans* is a disappointment . . . where was René Clair, who was supposed to be directing?" says the critic of "*The Spectator*." "Some critics have complained that *The Flame of New Orleans* isn't the old Clair; it isn't quite, but it is the best of the new one," says the critic of "*The New Statesman*."

Personally, I found it a little slow, but pleasantly entertaining and with a number of particularly delightful touches which had very much more of the characteristic Clair touch than anything seen in *The Ghost Goes West*, for example. One gets the impression that in this film Clair's natural genius has been subdued by his unfamiliar surroundings; that he is clearly bidding for security in the Hollywood scene and does not feel sufficiently at home to indulge his wit and imagination too freely. One thinks of a witty conversationalist suddenly brought into a drawing-room full of people he doesn't know very well: his gifts are not entirely hidden, but neither do they get full play, because he is not well enough acquainted with the company to know just how far he can go.

What is the Clair Touch?

To ask "Where was René Clair?" therefore, appears to me to be much too severe. His hand is at least so apparent that a discerning critic not knowing the name of the director might assert that whoever he was he owed much to Clair's influence. In what does this Clair touch consist?

First, and most obviously perhaps, Clair conceives his narrative visually. One of the most refreshing things about *The Flame of New Orleans* is that Clair has not forgotten what he learnt in making silent films. But it is a pity that he has not used his sound with equal imagination. In real life we seldom hear all the sound which strikes our ears. The mind selects to hear certain of them

only, and by a similar selection in the film track, especially where made in relation to the picture, sound can become a most powerful aid to expression. But sound is seldom used thus, probably because directors as a whole have had no opportunity to isolate problems of sound expression, as the visual part was so long isolated in silent films; and thus sound is nearly always used with that kind of photographic realism which is essentially so unrealistic.

This fact, I believe, has given rise to a certain misunderstanding. In many films, and the most inferior, both sound and picture are used unimaginatively. In a



René Clair peers through the finder to see camera effect of Marlene Dietrich descending stairs.

small number of the better kind, we find that the director has taken the trouble at least to use his camera effectively. Thus we tend to regard as best those films which are primarily visual in conception, believing that it is that which constitutes their virtue, and regarding sound as a merely naturalistic adjunct, for expressive purposes useless or, indeed, embarrassing.

The French, especially Renoir, have probably gone further than any others in developing the use of sound. Clair himself, in the early thirties, made some notable experiments with music, for example in *A Nous la Liberté*. And one might have hoped that in *The Flame of New Orleans* he

"The Flame of New Orleans" is overcome. A shot with significant foreground interest from the film of that name.



would have continued the good work. The new, subdued Clair, however, has not been able to go so far. In the words of another critic, "Clair uses the silkiest of cameras, and more comes through the lens than over the sound track." We must perforce be content with what we find, and be grateful for what comes through the lens.

Most importantly, the visual emphasis is not something super-added. The whole development is always in terms of action. I cannot remember any point in which any actual words spoken were of critical importance in advancing the plot. "The plot is all come-and-go" as William Whitebait puts it.

The first scene of the story proper, after the prologue, is set in a New Orleans theatre. A banker, Charles Giraud (Roland Young) notices the attractive adventuress, Claire Ledoux (Marlene Dietrich) alone in an adjacent box, and becomes interested in her. By the subtleties of glances and gestures we are informed that she becomes aware of his interest. Suddenly she affects to faint in her box. The banker goes in to give assistance, motions back others who come in, is finally left alone with her, and after making sure she has recovered, withdraws to his own box again. In all this scene, such dialogue as there is is purely incidental. The whole thing might have been put without alteration into a silent film. Her introduction to the sailor, Robert Latour (Bruce Cabot) to whom she loses her heart, is likewise achieved in a piece of action: when he is offended by her manner, he overturns her carriage in the park, throwing her and her coachman into the mud.

Memorable Sequence

But the most memorable use of visual methods occurs in the scene in which Claire's past is so indiscreetly betrayed. To celebrate his engagement, the banker is giving a large reception. A bogus Russian count (Mischa Auer) arrives with a friend, but is completely bored until he spots Claire, whom he remembers having met in St. Petersburg.

He accosts her, but she has no wish to cultivate his acquaintance now, and sweeps disdainfully to the spinet, where, to the admiration of her doting fiancé, and the critical gaze of his suspicious relatives, she sits down to sing a naive little ballade, "Sweet is the Blush of May." From the far end of the room Mischa Auer tries to attract her attention by the most obvious winking, which she ignores. Then he leans towards his friend and whispers what is clearly a most

amusing and ribald piece of slander of her St. Petersburg days.

Unfortunately, as they become aware after some little time, their story is being overheard by the banker's brother-in-law. They immediately attend to the singing again, but too late. The brother-in-law tip-toes across to his wife and repeats the story. Claire is fully aware of what is happening. And while she sings the gentle strains of "Sweet is the Blush of May," it is clear that reflections far stormier agitate her mind.

Social Unease

This is one of the most delightful comedy scenes of the film, and it is essentially Rene Clair in every detail. It paints such a cameo of social unease as might have been taken straight from *The Italian Straw Hat*. Do you remember the character who had to wear tight new shoes, another who lost one of his white gloves, and the third whose tie was crooked, and how they all came together in that magnificent parade of social discomfort at the wedding in the mayor's office?

And the most interesting thing about this scene is that we never glean the slightest hint as to what the slanderous story was. The sound-track simply gives us the voice of Claire singing "Sweet is the Blush of May." All the rest is pure silent technique, achieved through the camera.

Even this visual emphasis, however, does not entirely explain the Clair touch. What is so characteristic of him is the way his camera picks out details, and details of apparently the slightest and most fortuitous kind. A piece of paper blown along by the wind, for example, he will seize upon and make an event of high significance.

The whole fuss and bother of *The Italian Straw Hat* arose simply because a young man accidentally damaged a lady's hat. It is therefore characteristic that what leads him into the story of *The Flame of New Orleans* is the sight of an abandoned wedding dress



Marlene Dietrich's performance in Clair's "The Flame of New Orleans" is one of the best things she has done to date.

floating down the waters of the Mississippi. The people who found it thought the young bride had drowned herself, but here, says Clair, is the real story. And the last irreverent shot in the film is of a naked arm coming through a port-hole of the young skipper's boat and casting the wedding dress on to the water.

This kind of idea is always appearing in Clair's work. Here some chance fragment of incident or detail crosses our vision, a piece of flotsam on the river, a lost glove, a damaged hat. To most people it is a trifle either insignificant or misunderstood. But (to Clair) it is part of a pattern of things in which the lives of people are involved, which we can discover if only we trace the subtle connecting links.

In the elaboration he can build round an apparently trifling incident he resembles no one so much as Lawrence Sterne: he attributed all the misfortunes in the life of Tristram Shandy, you remember, to the fact that at a certain crucial moment his mother asked his father whether he had remembered to wind the clock.

Satiric Implications

It is still necessary to make one other point about Clair's work: namely, that at its best his comedy is always satire. His comic situations are not merely very amusing, but they also imply social criticism. Clair's lance is tilted mainly against the affected superiority of wealth and position—against people who live up to a standard beyond their natural abilities and character because their adopted social condition demands it. This satire was seen at its best, of course, in *The Italian Straw Hat*, but there is the same kind of attitude behind *The Flame of New Orleans*.

This social purpose in Clair's work is of considerable importance in assessing its quality. I have reiterated in these articles almost to the point of boredom my conviction

that a good film must have some relation to reality. I think it can hardly be said too often. And my main purpose in repeating it so much is not simply to convince by repetition, but to suggest how many different forms this relation to reality may take. Dour documentary is by no means the only one.

I cannot leave the film without a comment on the performance of Marlene Dietrich. It is almost one of the best things she has done. If Rene Clair is not quite at his best, she certainly is, and alone would make the film worth seeing. The light-handed Rene Clair atmosphere is entirely suited to her expressive subtlety of glance and gesture.

Beside *The Flame of New Orleans* the remaining releases of the month appear as a somewhat ordinary bunch. But *The Lady with Red Hair* (Warner) directed by Kurt Bernhardt, and featuring Miriam Hopkins and Claude Rains, is above the average production level. It is the story of a famous actress who owes her success to David Belasco. She courts failure by breaking with Belasco, but when in response to her husband's appeal, Belasco undertakes to produce her again, all ends happily. It is based on the memoirs of an actual person, Mrs. Leslie Carter, and is dependent more on its characterisation than its somewhat slight story. The temperamental Mrs. Carter and the equally temperamental David Belasco are well played by Miriam Hopkins and Claude Rains respectively, and there are some equally good minor character sketches.

A film in the spectacular class is *Lady Hamilton* (United Artists) directed by Alexander Korda and with Vivien Leigh, Lawrence Olivier and Alan Mowbray in the principal roles. This is historical reconstruction on the grand scale which all the resources of the modern studio can achieve. Much play is made of incidents in Nelson's career and the war against Napoleon is not shown without modern implications on the defiance of dictatorship. But in the main the emphasis is on the Hamilton-Nelson romance. The old standard vintage, in short, in a very dazzling new bottle. Another interesting historical reconstruction is the film, *Atlantic Ferry*, directed by Walter Forde and featuring Michael Redgrave. It has some spectacular sea scenes.



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RELIGIOUS FILMS

Sir,—Your contributor, Mr. Ernest Lindgren, asks whether an amateur group has the courage to venture into the field of religious films. It may interest him to know that the Manchester Film Unit was formed eight years ago specifically 'to explore the use of the substandard film in the service of the Church.' Our experiences have brought us into contact with many different denominations in various parts of the world.

If we look in vain for a really satisfactory full-length religious film, is it not almost as difficult to find an outstanding religious novel? There are many stimulating films, with moral uplift, like "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town," but they take inspiration from a vague sort of humanitarianism which seems to fit Mr. Lindgren's wide definition of religion, but to my mind falls far short of the real thing.

Religion is a seven day a week affair which should permeate life far more completely than any totalitarian philosophy. To live a religious life is a job requiring expert instruction. To produce a good film is a job for experts. The church ought to have experts in Christian living; the studio ought to have experts in film technique. The trouble is that neither is interested in the other.

As a practical step, our Unit was formed by amateurs in both Christian living and film technique. The emphasis was on a Christian rule of life and our aim was to be 'a radiant cell of Christian living which is able, in some measure, to translate its radiance into terms of film.' Our efforts have always been of an experimental nature and so have not been freely available to other societies, but I believe that we are on the right lines. A diligent application to our purpose naturally led us to study the medium we were using and so to improve our technique, and I think that, when happier days return, we can promise some notable work.

EDWARD FORREST.

(Hon. Sec., Manchester Film Unit)

AMATEUR FILM LIBRARY
I.A.C. Viewpoint.

Sir,—Mr. F. J. Turner (July A.C.W.) touches a very wide subject. Here are some facts and views which I think will make the position clear.

The I.A.C. started many years ago with a flourish of trumpets and rather expensive ideas. A closed competition was held each year and the film manufacturers very kindly presented the I.A.C. with most of the copies of winning films. A fair sized Library was built up.

About four years ago, I.A.C. finances overtook the ambitious programme and the

Letters to the Editor

The Editor is always glad to hear from readers, but does not necessarily endorse the views expressed.

then officials retired. Leslie Froude, W. M. Valon and others decided that despite debts in the region of £100-£150, the I.A.C. was of sufficient benefit to amateurs to be worth rescuing. Now, by dint of hard work and perseverance in face of opposition and plenty of kicks (which I think were hardly deserved), the I.A.C. is on a sound financial footing and able to pay its way.

The present Committee does not feel that the film manufacturers, or A.C.W., should be expected to stand the cost of providing a film library for amateurs. Admittedly by so doing they would be making a valuable contribution to the amateur movement. But any library should be self-supporting. Thus we have, since taking office, adopted the policy of paying our way. By keeping quiet and getting on with the job, we have cleared the debt and lately there has been more cash to spare to devote to the library. 1941 should see the number of films in it increased from 60 to 70.

A Question of Cost

Naturally it would be grand if these films could be made available to every amateur, whether an I.A.C. member or not, but cost of the necessary quantities of copies would need more cash than any but a millionaires' club could afford. Therefore the I.A.C. Library is available to members (whose sub. is 10/6—clubs 21/-) at a charge of 2/- a title. Certain films are free for screening to the Services, etc.

By utilising the 2/- charge and a large proportion of the 10/6 sub., we find we can now provide copies of films at the rate of some 12 a year. Increased membership will, of course, increase the number of films available.

The F.C.S. and I.A.C. have already discussed the possibilities of pooling library resources. My colleagues and I are hopeful that one day we shall see both libraries combined. We know A.C.W. will continue to provide the necessary publicity for any project which genuinely assists the amateur movement. We do not think it right, however, that amateurs should expect the trade and the press to provide the cash for their libraries. They have already done

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nobly in getting both the I.A.C. and the F.C.S. libraries established. Surely it is up to the I.A.C., F.C.S. and amateurs to carry on the work.

As I see it, the only "problem" is that the expansion of any library is limited by the finance available therefor. The wide use of amateur films under war conditions of today is, I think, fair proof that we were right in pulling the Institute out of the doldrums.

R. A. CATHLES.
(Hon. Treasurer, I.A.C.)

FEDERATION REPLIES

Sir,—F. J. Turner, in your last issue, suggests that the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers or the Federation of Cinematograph Societies should really get down to the job of inaugurating a library of the best amateur films, presumably so that

amateurs would flock to become members and be able to borrow these productions in much the same way as they hire programmes from the sub-standard libraries.

To do this would indeed set up a landmark in cine history. But before this Utopian state of affairs could be brought to pass, nothing short of Nazi methods would have to be used. Has Mr. Turner any idea of the price of a copy of "Refuge," say (a Federation Library film in 3 reels of 16mm., presented by A.C.W. and Ilford, Ltd.), or where the money would come from, especially in wartime? What is the standard whereby the "best" amateur films could be selected, and where are all these films? (Many lone workers disdain to enter competitions and hide their lights under bushels). These are only a few of the obstacles in the way ; there are many others.

With regard to the Federation, it should be borne in mind that this organisation has been set up for the benefit of *societies*, not individuals. They can apply for legal advice on cine matters, have technical difficulties solved; they can have their own competitions judged by members of the Panel, and be visited by lecturers on all branches of amateur cinematography. They can borrow films, made by affiliated societies, from the Library, and attend meetings where co-operation and "gossiping" cine are encouraged.

In short, the present is the wrong time to think about a representative library of the "best amateur films," and in peace-time the most competent body to tackle the job would be the British Film Institute.

The one thing that does appeal to me in Mr. Turner's letter is his description of the Federation as "an organisation that has the confidence of the amateur cine public." For this bouquet, many thanks!

G. WAIN, A.R.P.S., (Hon. Sec., F.C.I.).

Round the Societies

Notes on Script and Films

RECENTLY formed by six enthusiasts, **Sivad Screen Service**, a new London society for amateurs, has commenced active production without extended preliminaries. An unpretentious offering, their first film, "Celluloid Cameo," is being shot at sound speed in monochrome. It is hoped, at a later date, to record a sound track on film, if suitable facilities become available and, in this respect, a larger club may co-operate. Despite present difficulties, reasonable progress has been marked on the first film. Two weekends have been devoted by Frank Thomas, the director, and Denys Davis, cameraman, to the filming of country scenes, in addition to eight evenings in the studio.

Measuring 30' x 18' x 15' high, this has been equipped with 6 kw. lighting on portable stands, and overhead wide-angle floods have also been installed. To cut production costs and avoid waste, certain sequences are symbolic only but, it has been found, nothing is lost in their effectiveness. Half the film has been shot and for this a swing band and dancers co-operated. Use is to be made of an optical printer.

The society has sent us a copy of the script of "Celluloid Cameo"; we hope that other societies will follow their lead. Some 87 shots are listed. The film opens with shots of a shepherd playing on a reed pipe in a peaceful pastoral scene. He eventually pockets the pipe and passes along a road. The camera pans with him until a scarecrow, in the foreground, dominates the frame.

The shot of the scarecrow is mixed to one of the shadow of the conductor of an orchestra, the similarity of position being marked. Symbolic shots of orchestral concert, leading to trolley up to Handel composing at the harpischord. Back to conductor. Curtain falls, blacking out scene completely. (We might note here that it is not usual for curtains to be used at an orchestral concert, although

it is true that one of the large symphony orchestras is now touring the theatres and cinemas. In this context, however, the shot is justified).

Electric sign flashing: "Swing Dance." Shots of jitterbugs and individual members of dance band. "Shot 55. Trucking. Man puffs cigarette. Blows out smoke. Camera pans with the smoke and through it the dancers may be seen, executing native dance. The scene is dissolved into the negative to give the impression of two dancers as coloured persons performing on dark ground against clear sky."

Dancers eventually sink to the ground. Log fire at night. Globe of world slowly revolving, flames burning beneath it. Clenched fist, Swastika on sleeve, pounds a treaty. Typical English pastoral scene. The shepherd again, but he is now in the uniform of the Home Guard. He looks up. Shot of pylon. He turns aside and looks other way. Country scene, with lane and haystack. The last shot is the same as the first: a wide open landscape. In the shadow of two trees stands a man (the shepherd) barely distinguishable in the distance.

Imaginative Work

The script is imaginatively done, but the theme does not seem to be entirely clear, principally because the war scenes are not really related to the rest, for all that the shepherd becomes a Home Guard. The body of the film gives a brief glimpse of the development of music—or, at any rate, of various aspects of musical expression. Then comes the war, and the shepherd no longer has his pipe. Is, then, music dead?

On the contrary, we feel that the authors intended to convey that war is but a violent check to the elemental rhythm of life—a rhythm which is interpreted by music and dance—but that although it quickens the rhythm and produces hideous discord, it cannot shatter something which is greater than itself. Of course, it can be said that the steady pulse of life beats in the pastoral scenes on which the film closes, but then the

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authors have put so much insistence on man-made music that this implication is not readily apparent. Why not close the film on the Home Guard playing a mouth organ?

The society aims at producing one reel interest films on 16mm. neg.-pos. Due to the closing of other clubs, several first class technicians are available to it. Interested readers can write to the society at 56, Brook Street, W.1., but, it should be noted, it does not offer any social amenities whatsoever. To the members, production is of paramount importance.

* * *

Although few reports from the Hyde C.S. (Hon. Sec.: E. A. Schoolden, "Edenhurst," 200, Dowson Road, Hyde, Cheshire) have appeared of late, this is not because the society is fading out! At the recent annual general meeting the officers and committee were re-elected, and a satisfactory credit balance reported. Meetings, usually held on Saturday afternoons in gorgeous weather, have only been moderately well attended, though some good lectures and film shows have been given.

Among the former were a talk on "Amateur Cartooning" (with a demonstration) by member G. Wain, A.R.P.S., and a paper by Stanley W. Bowler, F.R.P.S. (Gevaert, Ltd.), on "Film Planning," which was read by member F. Smith; this was followed by a film which illustrated the lecture. Regular film shows are still being held, programmes being exchanged with other Federated societies such as Salford C.S. and Oswestry C.S. As announced last month, the society shared the premier award in the Federation's 1941 Competition and also obtained a Certificate of Merit.

* * *

THE I.A.C. (Hon. Gen. Sec.: L. A. Froude, 50, High Street, Epsom) reports that the **Stoke-on-Trent A.C.S.** keeps members in touch by holding monthly luncheons—an idea that might well be remembered in peace time. The society hopes to make a sound magazine composed of shots discarded from its silent productions. They have a flair for humour (witness "It Never Rains," a "Ten Best" winner) and should produce an amusing film.

The Bulletin records that a Scottish member has raised £250 since the outbreak of war by showing films which have all been produced in the family (two of the films are in the I.A.C. Library). The member is not named, but is perhaps Mr. Frank M. Marshall (also a "Ten Best" winner) who produces delightful films featuring his two children, Muriel and Nairn.

One of his latest (and best) pictures—it

was awarded a special prize at the Scottish Film Festival—is the 400 ft. colour film, "An Apple a Day."

The children, in mischievous mood, 'scrump' green apples and wander down to a lake. They are about to embark in a small boat when they are stopped in time by an angler who intended to use it himself. While he is fussing around it they make their way to his car. Muriel amuses herself by selecting a fly from the fishing tackle and pinning it on Nairn's coat. Then they both play at noughts and crosses on the nice shiny surface of the car. The infuriated angler catches sight of them, and, while he is busily rubbing off the chalk marks, they scamper off to the boat and cast off.

They have not been on the water long when Nairn is sick. And he really does look ill. He is deathly pale (remember, this is a colour film); and there is not the slightest trace of over-acting. They get back home just about the time that the angler also returns home in indignation and disgust. A brass plate on the gate reveals that he is a doctor. The boy is put to bed. Mother consults a telephone directory; her finger traces out the name we have seen on the plate.

The doctor arrives and, as he gets his bag out of the luggage boot, notices that there are more noughts and crosses to be rubbed off... He looks at the boy suspiciously, glances at his tongue and thumps his chest (an operation in which Nairn is keenly interested, alarmed though he is). There is a coat on the floor, with a fly on the lapel... Grimly, the doctor measures out a tremendous dose of castor oil. Then comes the best shot in the film, a marvellous big close-up of Nairn gazing hypnotically in tearful anguish. This is followed by the final shot—a close-up of the medicine being poured out relentlessly, the boy in the background looking on.

There is not a false note anywhere in the film and the children are not the least bit camera conscious. In none of the many films of them that we have seen have they ever over-acted; the grown-ups with which they appear sometimes do.

Perhaps we ought not to add this, but Mr. Marshall tells us that this film was produced hurriedly and, from a rather scrappy script, and remarks that "it is rather curious that it should have a much greater appeal than other films, the scripts for which were revised again and again. I sometimes think the colour has something to do with it and that an audience is content with slower action when they have the comparative novelty of colour to keep them interested."

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There is a good deal of truth in this, but we feel that his remark about constant revision of script is the key to the basic reason. "An Apple a Day" is a realistic, spontaneous cameo that owes little to theatrical convention. The situations are all credible; Muriel and Nairn take the parts of Muriel and Nairn and not of children the producer may have read about. Family theatrical films have rarely this merit of genuineness; it is difficult to believe in father as a burglar, or even in father dissolving into a paroxysm of helpless wrath when he hits his thumb.

Of course, it is a good thing that a script should be polished and repolished, but one cannot escape the thought that if it needs a great deal of attention it may be because there is something fundamentally wrong with it. Take the case of "Holidays, Hurrah!" which Mr. Marshall sent us with "An Apple a Day." There was no lessening of technical skill in its production—technically indeed, it is almost faultless. Yet, paradoxically, though it is quicker moving than "An Apple a Day," it seems to be slower, principally because one gets a little restless over the situations. They are 'acted' and do not always ring true.

The story concerns the family's frustrated preparations for a holiday. Ill-packed bags, a flat tyre, a window left open, crockery smashed and eventually a telegram to say that the hotel has been burnt down and that no other accommodation is available, all conspire to confine the family to the house, hours after they should have been on their way. But the catalogue of misfortune is too complete; there is rather too much invention. This is a normal, pleasant (and intelligent) family, and such things happen not to normal families but to Keystone comedy characters. Cut the film, so that you shorten the long bow, and you restore the situations to a homely plane.

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8-Minute Films

Each month we publish brief notes on interesting short films recently released. They are mostly M. of I. productions, and some you may have already seen, but in most cases they continue to circulate for a month or two. Pressure on space limits the feature this month, but it is hoped to publish more reviews in our next issue.

LADY BE KIND. Production: John Corfield. Direction: Rodney Ackland. Distribution: M.O.I. 8 mins.

Two factory workers off night-duty go to their billets, one next door to the other. One is greeted cheerily by his hostess. The other finds himself regarded as a nuisance in the house. Breakfast is over, nothing left for him. Junior has the wireless blaring at full-blast. He asks to have his coat dried while he sleeps, and it is taken grudgingly by the lady of the house. Out of one of its pockets falls a letter wherein she finds herself described as a "little Hitler" by the worker's wife.

The hostess from next door is paying a visit, and tells her that if only she would treat her boarder with consideration it would pay her: the factory worker is in the front line no less than the soldier. When the boarder comes down from his sleep he finds his coat dry and a warm meal on the table; and there begins a new era of happiness and co-operation for them both.

This is a quite well-produced piece of dramatic propaganda, in which the action, lightened with many deft touches, effectively conveys its moral. The actors do not entirely avoid a theatrical technique, but on the whole it is not too disturbing. One wonders just how valuable propaganda of this kind is in those cases where it might be most needed: each party to a strained relationship is more likely to think that it is the other who needs to see the film.

ACK ACK. Production: Shell Film Unit. Direction: Peter Bayliss. Distribution: M.O.I. 8 mins.

An admirably clear exposition of the working of an anti-aircraft gun station, which includes cine-diagrams illustrating the value of A.A. fire in the prevention of accurate bombing. The Shell Film Unit have a unique record for films which can explain complicated subjects of scientific or technical interest in simple and lucid terms. Their experience is evident in this film which will repay the closest analysis as an essay in instruction. Those who want to study this kind of technique at greater leisure, by the way, and have the means to do so, could hardly do better than to borrow from the Central Film Library in South Kensington another film made recently by the same unit, called *Hydraulics*, an excellent treatment of first principles.

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